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ABSTRACT

Results of a survey of the views of college and university presidents about the national higher education associations and interviews with 33 key national observers are considered. The survey was designed to obtain presidents' perceptions of the national associations collectively and of eight selected associations individually. It focused on the relationships among the associations, their current and future roles, their programs and services, and some aspects of their operations. Usuable questionnaires were obtained from 1,284 presidents. The eight associations are the following: Association of American Colleges, American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Association of American Universities, American Council on Education, Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. (SW)

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SUMMARY REPORT

PRESIDENTIAL VIEWS OF HIGHER EDUCATION'S NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP ASSOCIATIONS

The Center for the Study of Higher Education
School of Education
The University of Michigan

Prepared by:

Joseph P. Cosand, Study Director
Gerald Gurin
Marvin W. Peterson
Frank R. Brister

Under a grant from the Ford Foundation

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was made possible through the cooperation of many persons and various organizations. The presidential and observer response was indicative of the high interest in the study and of its potential value to the associations and to higher education as a whole.

In particular recognition is given to the following participants:

College and University Presidential Respondents

Presidents, Board Chairpersons, and Chief Executive Officers of:
- Association of American Colleges
- American Association of Community and Junior Colleges
- American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- Association of American Universities
- American Council on Education
- Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges
- National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
- National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges

National Observers

The Ford Foundation.

INTRODUCTION

One of the features of the United States' decentralized national system of higher education is the existence of numerous national associations. They are based on institutional and individual membership patterns; represent varied types of institutions and their interests, specialized functions, and diverse academic and administrative groups; and have varied missions. They have been called on to serve institutional needs and higher education's interests at the national level.

In the 1980's these associations, particularly those with presidential participation, are facing difficult pressures and challenges to their leadership role. Institutions are seeking association assistance with their own needs and concerns. Critical national issues affecting higher education emphasize the need for more effective association representation at the federal level. At the same time institutions' willingness and ability to support their associations philosophically and financially from declining budgets is uncertain. Association capacity to deal (individually or collectively) with growing demands, while facing potentially declining memberships or resources, is of concern. In this milieu there is little information about how institutional presidents perceive the role of and what they expect from their national associations. These problems and a need for maintaining strong association leadership for higher education which reflects presidential input prompted this Ford Foundation supported study.

This report summarizes two parts of this study: a survey of the views of college and university presidents about the national higher education associations with institutional membership and presidential representation and interviews with 33 key national observers. A more detailed report with a limited distribution will follow. The individual associations will also receive specific data pertaining only to their association.

The purpose of the survey was to obtain presidents' perceptions of the national associations collectively and of eight selected associations individually. It focused on the relationships among the associations, their current and future roles, their programs and services, and some aspects of their operations. The survey questionnaire was endorsed by the board chairpersons of the eight associations and was sent to the presidents of all accredited colleges and universities in the United States. It was based on preliminary interviews with presidents of institutions from each of the associations and with their executive directors. The survey response rates are shown in Table I.

TABLE I: PRESIDENTIAL RESPONSE RATES

Total Response Rates:		
Number of Presidents Surveyed	2789	100.0%
Total Returns	1467	52.5%
Usable Returns	1284	46.0%

This response rate represents the return from two mailings of the questionnaire, and was somewhat lower than we had anticipated. An analysis of the responses of the presidents who returned "unusable" questionnaires may give some indication of the reasons of those presidents who did not respond at all. Over half (about 60%) of the 183 "unusable" questionnaires came from presidents who returned blank questionnaires, indicating that they did not feel they were relevant respondents or had enough knowledge of the associations to respond intelligently. The questionnaires were sent to all of the institutional presidents, including those who were not members of any of the eight associations (listed on page 2) covered in the survey. We expect that a disproportionate number of the non-respondents were these non-members, and our response rate would have been considerably higher if we had sent our questionnaires only to members of at least one of the associations. For example, our preliminary figures indicate that we received usable returns from 59% of the members of ACE, and that for the other associations the member return ratio varied from about 50 to 75%, considerably higher than the 46% in Table I. In general we expect that our usable returns were disproportionately from the presidents more involved and knowledgeable about the associations.

Follow-up phone interviews were conducted with fifty-seven presidents who currently or recently held leadership roles in one or more of the eight associations in order to help identify future issues that they felt the associations should be prepared to address.

Due to time and study limitations and still to obtain presidential perceptions of specific major membership associations about which they were knowledgeable, only eight associations (identified on page 2) with institutionally-based membership, presidential representation, and a Washington base of operations, were selected for specific attention. (However, except for general views of ACE the report will not identify specific associations.)

Recognizing that many presidents' views of these national associations might be somewhat general or uninformed, particularly of the federal relations function of the associations, the presidents' survey was supplemented by structured interviews with thirty-three key national figures. They were selected from 150 names submitted by the association executive officers. They represented positions such as congressional members or aides, HEW and federal executive officials, other higher education related agency or association heads in Washington, foundation officials, and former national figures in the associations or in government.

THE PRESIDENTIAL SURVEY

VIEWS OF ACE AND PRESIDENTIAL ASSOCIATIONS

A section of the survey was focused on the presidential views of ACE and the seven major presidential associations in the study: AAC, AACJC, AASCU, AAU, CASC, NAICU and NASULGC. Questions referring to the internal functioning of the associations are not reported in this summary. Some questions referring more generally to the mission and representation of the associations are reported in Figure 1. They represent ACE members' views of ACE, and in a series of parallel questions, presidents' views of their primary presidential association (the one they belong to or the one they ranked as "primary" if they belonged to more than one).

Association Mission. Presidents were asked to rate whether their association's mission was "clear" or "diffuse," and whether it was "appropriately comprehensive," "too broad," or "too specialized." Presidents are in almost complete unanimity in their views that their primary presidential association's mission is "clear" and "appropriately comprehensive;" only 6% of the presidents feel it is "diffuse" or "too broad." The national presidential associations perform many types of functions and the presidents feel this is appropriate and does not diffuse their mission.

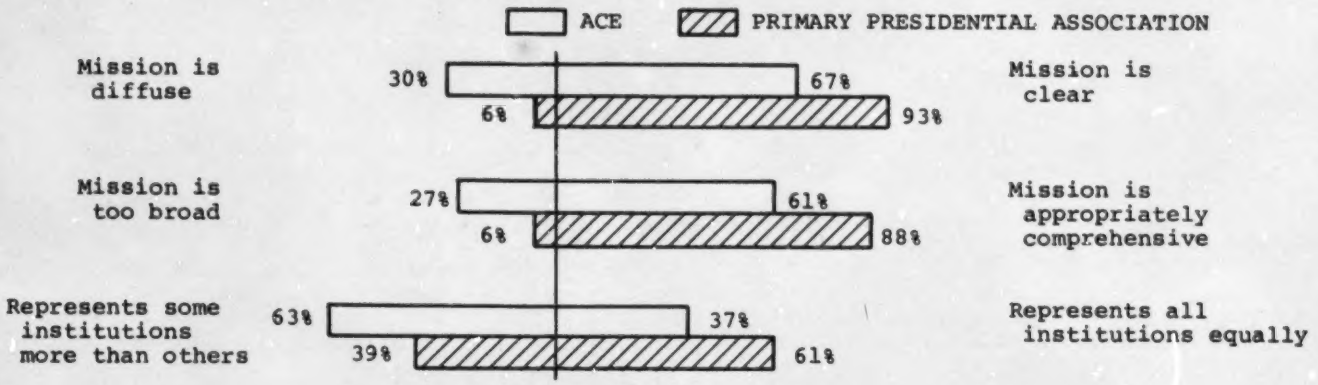
While this is also generally true of the presidents' view of ACE's mission, a sizeable number of presidents have a more critical reaction: 30% of ACE's members feel ACE'S mission is "diffuse," and 27% feel it is "too broad." They support a more specialized role for ACE.

It is interesting that only 1% felt that either ACE's or their association's mission was "too specialized." Criticism, when it occurs is that the association is doing too much and not that it should be assuming functions that it has not assumed.

Representation. In contrast to the views on association mission, the questions on whether the primary association or ACE represents "all its member institutions equally" or "some types of institutions more than others" received a more critical reaction in Figure 1. A majority of the presidents feel that ACE, whose membership reflects the whole diversity of higher education, represents "some more than others;" but this reaction is also expressed by almost two out of five presidents when they view the representation pattern of their primary presidential association with its narrower range of institutional diversity.

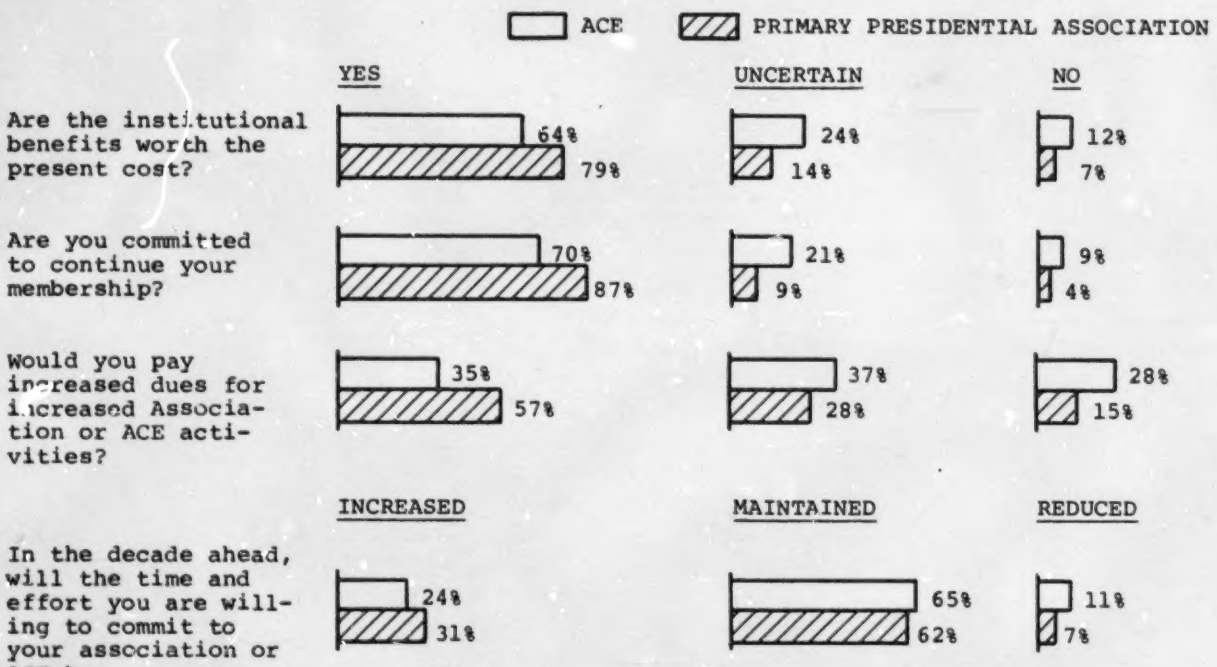
Commitment to Associations. The presidents' commitment to ACE and to their primary presidential association was explored in a set of questions that are presented in Figure 2. In general, presidents feel committed to their membership in these associations, feel the benefits are worth the costs of membership, and are willing to either maintain or increase the time and effort committed to these associations in the decade ahead. There is much less readiness to "pay increased dues for increased activities." On all the questions, a somewhat larger number of presidents express commitment to their primary presidential association than to ACE.

FIGURE 1: MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MISSION AND REPRESENTATION OF ACE AND PRIMARY PRESIDENTIAL ASSOCIATION



NOTE: Figures in bars do not total to 100% because they do not include members who had "No Opinion," or the few (1%) in the second question who felt the mission was "too specialized."

FIGURE 2: MEMBERS' COMMITMENT TO ACE AND PRIMARY PRESIDENTIAL ASSOCIATION



DIFFERENTIATION OF FUNCTIONS AMONG NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

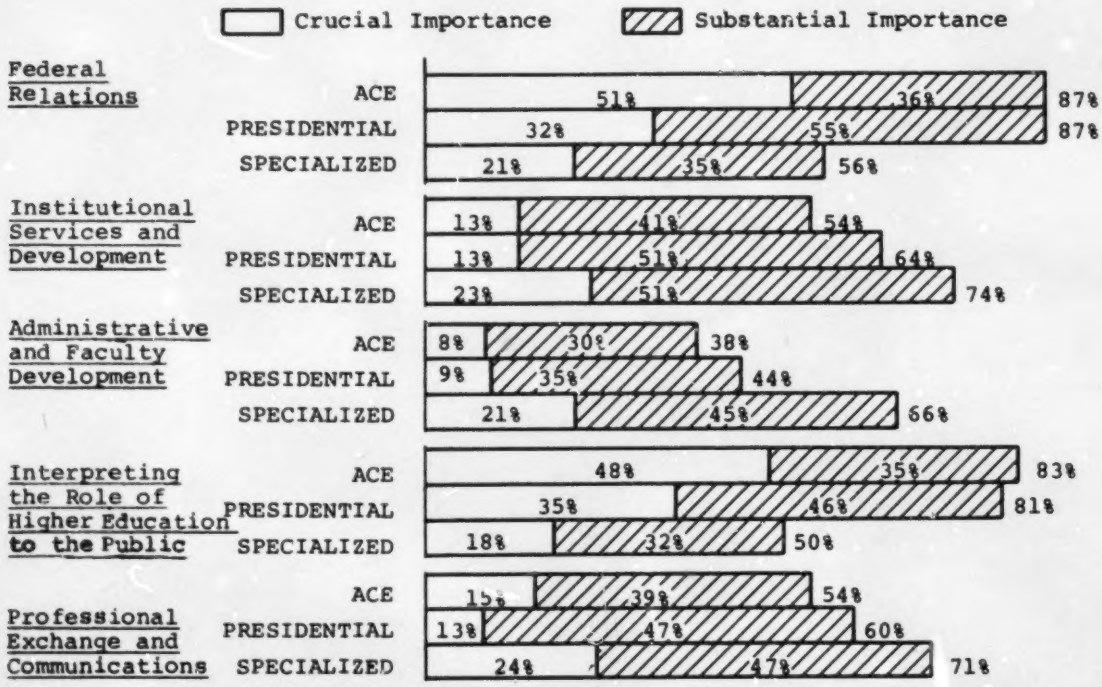
One central issue in the survey was the presidents' views of the extent to which they felt that different types of associations should concentrate on similar or different functions. One question in the survey listed five functions and three types of national associations: the American Council on Education (ACE); National Presidential Associations with institutional membership; and Specialized Associations (e.g., NACUBO, NASFAA, etc.), and asked:

> "In the decade ahead, how important do you feel each function should be to each type of association?"

The presidents' answers in Figure 3 assign somewhat different functions to different associations. For example, 51% of the presidents feel that ACE's "crucial" function is to represent higher education's interest to the federal government, but many fewer presidents feel that function is the one that is most crucial to the mission of the other two types of associations. In contrast, presidents see institutional services, staff development and professional exchange as more crucial functions of specialized assocations than of the other two association types.

However, the presidents seem to desire less differentiation of function than one might have expected given the criticism sometimes expressed over the confusing overlap in the activities of national higher education associations. While presidents clearly distinguish the functions of ACE and the specialized associations, there is considerable similarity in their views of ACE and the presidential associations, if presidents are included who feel a function is of "substantial" as well as "crucial" importance. The great majority of the presidents (over 80%) feel that, over the next decade, their presidential associations and ACE should give substantial importance to both representing higher education's interest to the public and to the federal government. A much smaller number of presidents feel that services to their institutions and staff should have such importance over the next decade, and almost as many assign these functions to ACE as to the presidential associations.

FIGURE 3: PRESIDENTS' VIEWS OF IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS OF ACE, PRESIDENTIAL AND SPECIALIZED ASSOCIATIONS



VIEWS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS COLLECTIVELY

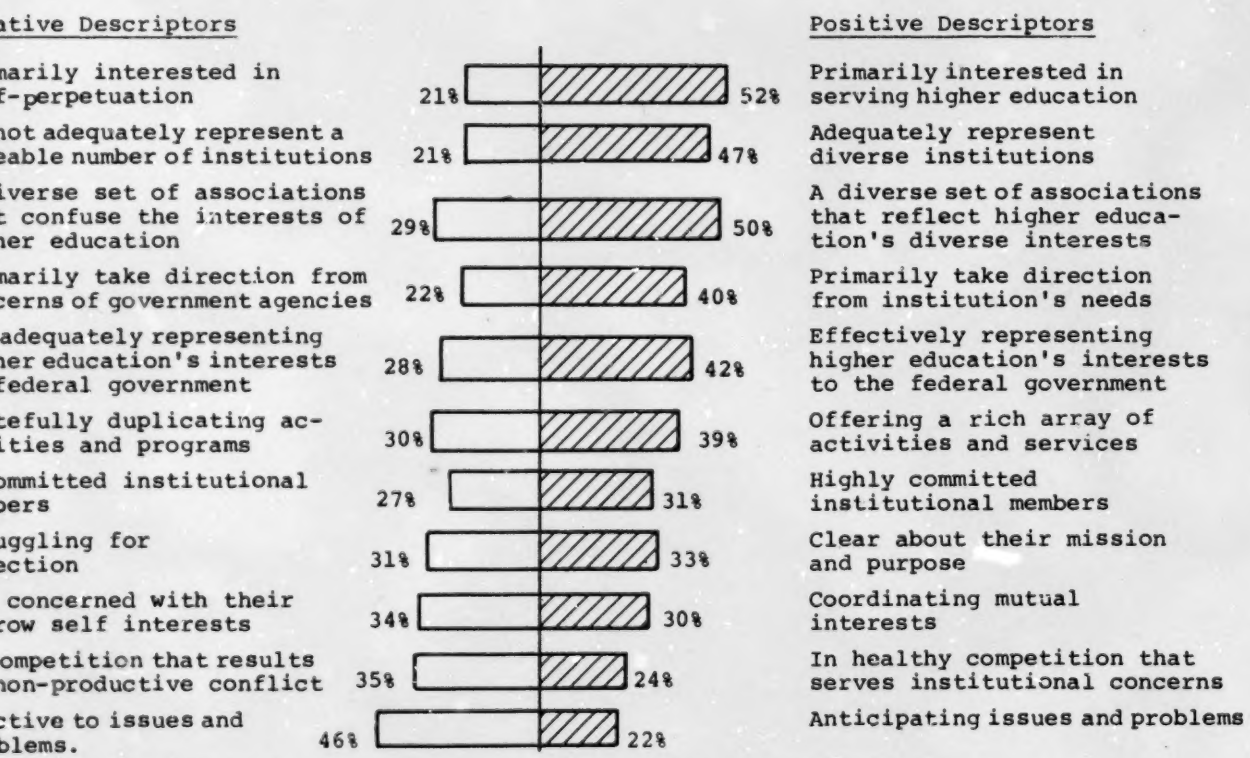
In addition to the views of the national associations of which they are members, we were interested in presidents' views of higher education national associations more generally. A set of questions asked for the views of "all of the national associations . . . collectively, the total picture they present . . . their activities, their relationships with each other, their cumulative impact on the national scene." In the major question on this issue, presidents were presented with a series of five-point scales, anchored on each end by contrasting descriptive phrases, and asked to describe the national associations on each of these scales.

The presidents' responses in Figure 4 present only those answers which fell on one side of the scale, eliminating those who checked "no opinion" or the mid-point "3" on the five-point scale. The eleven scales are listed in order from the most positive to the most negative reactions, obtained by subtracting the percent giving a negative response from those giving a positive response.

As indicated in Figure 4, the most positive response was to the scale that reflected on the motives of association leadership, viewing the associations collectively as "primarily interested in serving higher education effectively" rather than "primarily interested in self-perpetuation." This was reinforced by observing that according to the fourth scale, they primarily took direction from institutional rather than governmental needs.

The second two most favorable responses are on scales that refer positively to the associations' "reflection of" and "representation" of higher education's diversity. This is reinforced by the positive items reporting them as "offering a rich array of activities and services" and "effectively representing higher education's interests to the federal government." On the other hand, these are balanced by two of the three least favorable

FIGURE 4: PRESIDENTS' GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS COLLECTIVELY



NOTE: Figures for each scale do not total to 100% because they do not include presidents who checked "no opinion" or the mid-point on the scale.

responses which stress some of the negative aspects of this representation of diverse interests; namely, a set of associations "too concerned with their narrow self interests" and "in competition that results in non-productive conflict and divisiveness." The most negative description portrays them as "reactive to issues and problems." Items on which the presidents are evenly divided are their positive and negative views having to do with "commitment of members" and clarity of "mission and purpose." As a whole, what is most striking in Figure 4 is the fairly equal balance between positive and negative responses as the presidents view the national associations collectively.

To some extent, presidents may be fairly equally divided in their views of the national associations collectively, because they are also equally divided in the stance they take on the basic issue of how the national associations should deal with the realities of their diverse interests. In one question, presidents were asked "when different associations have different positions on an issue, it is important to . . ." and presented with a five-point scale anchored by the phrase "arrive at a compromise and present a unified higher education position to the federal government," and by "recognize the conflicting interests and present the different positions to the federal government." Forty-four percent of the presidents chose the "arrive at a compromise" end of the scale, 42 percent chose the "present the different positions" end, and 12 percent chose the middle position (a few checked "no opinion"). Among the presidents, there is polarization rather than a clear mandate on this issue.

Admittedly most presidents may not be very knowledgeable about the national associations collectively and may only be reflecting impressionistic reactions. In the survey, 71% of the presidents indicated the basis of their views was only "general impressions." But their views on the associations were very similar to the 24% of the presidents who felt their views were based on "informed opinions." It is also interesting that only a small percentage of the presidents chose the "no opinion" category on these scales.

SUGGESTED REORGANIZATION AMONG NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The final section of the Presidential Survey concerned the presidents' views on a central issue of the study: how should the national associations coordinate their activities and relationships with each other to best serve the interests of their institutional memberships and of higher education generally.

The survey included the following question:

> There has been some discussion about different organization patterns of and relationships among the national associations. Below we have listed five alternative models. The first three (A, B, and C) are alternative models for the present system in which ACE attempts to serve as an umbrella organization. The last two (D and E) represent even more extreme reorganizations for structuring the relationships among the national organizations. IN THE DECADE AHEAD WHICH ONE OF THESE FIVE MODELS DO YOU THINK WOULD BEST SERVE BOTH YOUR INSTITUTION AND THE BROADER CONCERNS OF ALL HIGHER EDUCATION?

The presidents were asked to rank the five models from one to five. The models and the presidents' first and second rankings appear in Figure 5. (The "first choice" and "second choice" figures in Figure 5 each total to slightly more than 100% because some presidents indicated more than one first or second choice.)

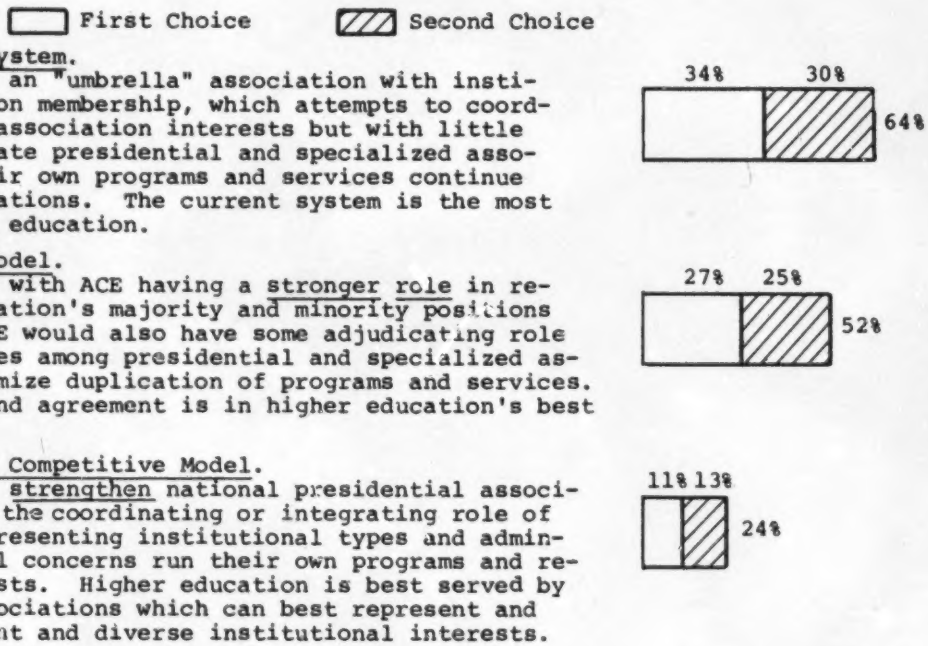
The responses in Figure 5 suggest that a majority of the presidents are generally satisfied with the present pattern of organizing the relationships among the national associations. Almost two-thirds of the presidents (64%) rank the current system as their first or second choice. It is the most popular of the five models.

The second most popular choice is the model that generally endorses the current system, but with a somewhat stronger coordinating role for ACE. About half the presidents (52%) chose this as their first or second choice among the five. While this model calls for some change in the present arrangements, we shall see in the following discussion that it is an alternative chosen by presidents who are predominantly satisfied with the current sytem.

The other three alternatives call for more dramatic changes in the pattern of relationships among the national associations. They call for very different kinds of changes. Models C and D are to some extent opposite solutions. The former calls for strengthening

the divergent presidential associations and deemphasizing the coordinating role of ACE; the latter calls for submerging the divergent interests in a strong national organization. Model E addresses a different issue -- the overlapping functions of the different types of associations -- and calls for change to a system where association functions are more differentiated, but with strong coordination of federal relations. Each of these three models is chosen by a minority of the presidents -- one quarter of them rank Model C their first or second choice, and one-third give these rankings to Model D or E.

FIGURE 5: PRESIDENTS' FIRST TWO CHOICES AMONG FIVE ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF ORGANIZATION AMONG NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS



A. Current, Pluralistic System.
ACE should continue as an "umbrella" association with institutional and association membership, which attempts to coordinate institution and association interests but with little direct control. Separate presidential and specialized associations which run their own programs and services continue as independent organizations. The current system is the most appropriate for higher education.

B. Stronger Coordinated Model.
The current system but with ACE having a stronger role in representing higher education's majority and minority positions on federal issues. ACE would also have some adjudicating role to resolve policy issues among presidential and specialized associations and to minimize duplication of programs and services. Greater coordination and agreement is in higher education's best interest.

C. Less Coordinated, More Competitive Model.
The current system but strengthen national presidential associations and deemphasize the coordinating or integrating role of ACE. Associations representing institutional types and administrative or functional concerns run their own programs and reflect their own interests. Higher education is best served by emphasizing strong associations which can best represent and respond to the different and diverse institutional interests.

D. Strong National Organization.
A major national organization with institutional memberships only, with special divisions for various institutional types which would replace the national presidential associations. It would play a strong role in federal relations and in programs dealing with institutional issues. Specialized individual membership associations would probably continue but with less emphasis on federal relations and/or institution-wide issues. A strong central focus for broad higher education issues is needed.

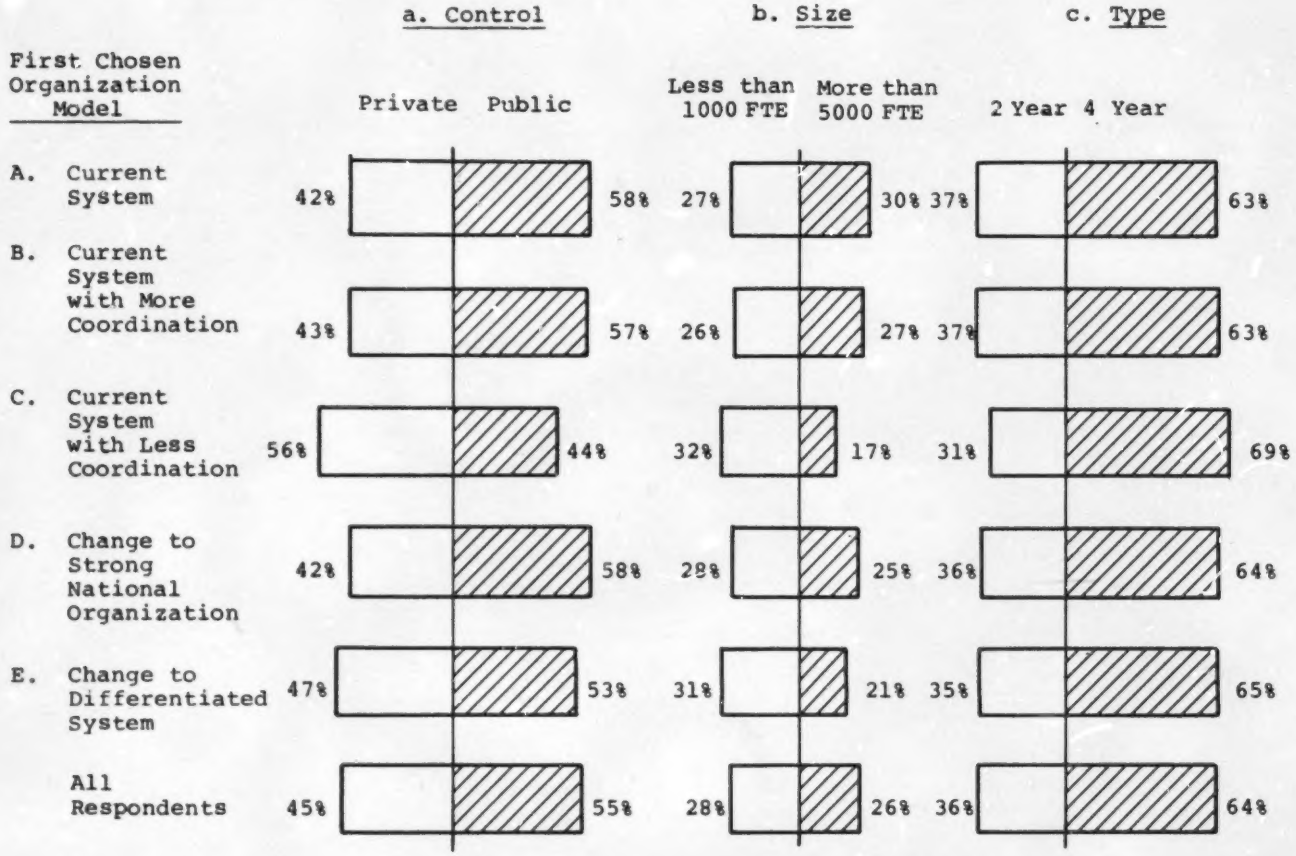
E. A Differentiated System.
An "umbrella" organization with association memberships only, which would deal only with federal relations. The national presidential associations would deal with institutional programs and services and represent their type institution in the umbrella organization. The specialized associations would deal with their functional or individual membership specialty and would represent their expertise in the umbrella organization. The major concern is to limit extensive duplication and unproductive competition.

While it is interesting to know how the presidents rank the different alternative models, it is more important to know why presidents make their choice. This can be examined by looking at the presidents who chose different models, and comparing them on the types of institutions they represent and their attitudes toward the associations represented in their responses to other questions in the survey.

TYPE OF INSTITUTION AND CHOICE OF ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

Do presidents who chose different models represent different types of institutions? Figure 6 looks at the presidents who selected different models as their first choice, and examines the extent to which they also differ in the types of institutions they represent: by private and public control, by size, and by two-year and four year status.

FIGURE 6: INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PRESIDENTS CHOOSING FIVE MODELS OF ORGANIZATION


a. Control
b. Size
c. Type
First Chosen Organization Model
Private
Public
Less than 1000 FTE
More than 5000 FTE
2 Year
4 Year
A. Current System
42% 58% 27% 30% 37% 63%
B. Current System with More Coordination
43% 57% 26% 27% 37% 63%
C. Current System with Less Coordination
56% 44% 32% 17% 31% 69%
D. Change to Strong National Organization
42% 58% 28% 25% 36% 64%
E. Change to Differentiated System
47% 53% 31% 21% 35% 65%
All Respondents
45% 55% 28% 26% 36% 64%

What is striking in the findings presented in Figure 6 is how little relationship there is between the model of organization a president prefers and the type of institution that president represents. The only model that is at all distinctive is Model C -- the alternative that calls for modifying the current system by strengthening the national presidential associations and deemphasizing the coordinating role of ACE. Those presidents who choose this alternative first come more often from small, private, four-year colleges -- institutions that are particularly concerned over the need for national representation in which their type of institutional interests will not be submerged. But even here the differences are not very striking: 56% of the presidents whose first choice is Model C represent private colleges, compared to 45% of all respondents; 32% of the presidents choosing Model C represent institutions of less than 1,000 FTE students, contrasted to 28% of all respondents; 69% of those whose first choice is Model C represent four-year institutions, compared to 64% of all respondents.

The fact that the differences among institutional types are not more striking can have important implications if any significant change occurs in the organization of relationships among the national associations. The survey findings suggest that any contemplated change toward one of the models will satisfy some presidents and dissatisfy others, but the satisfaction and dissatisfaction will not be concentrated in institutions of a particular control, size or type.

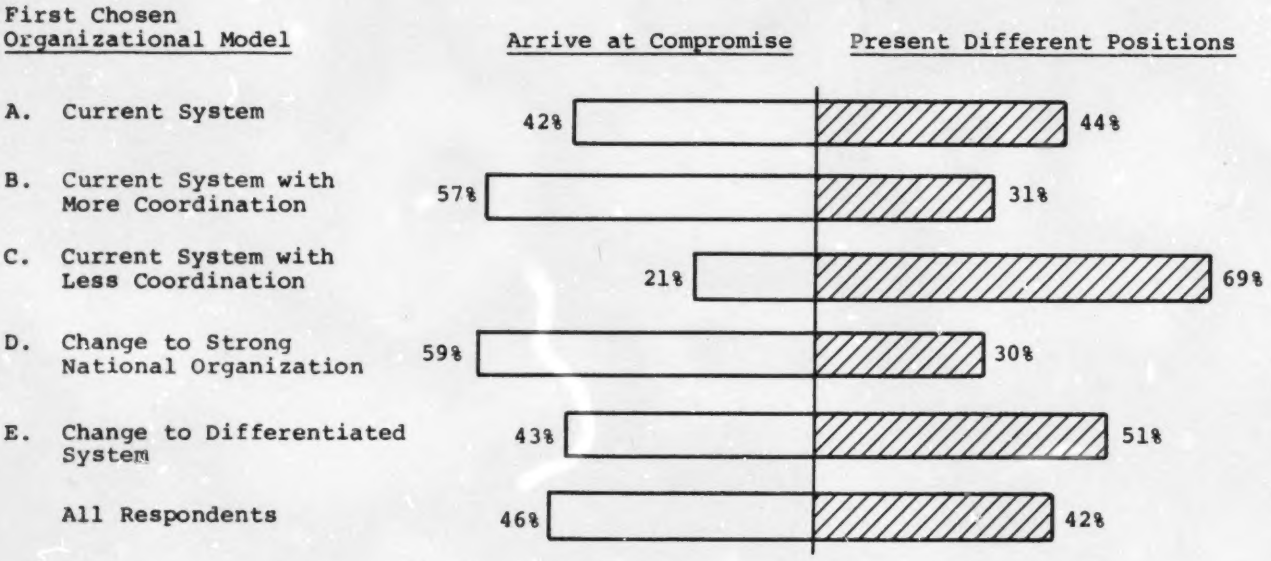
PRESIDENTIAL ATTITUDES AND CHOICE OF ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

In contrast to the similarity in the types of institutions represented by presidents who prefer different organizational models among national associations, there are noticeable differences between the presidents who choose different models on some of the other attitudes they expressed in responding to the survey.

Ideology About Conflict in Federal Relations. The presidents who chose the five organization models were compared on the question that asked whether, when associations differ on an issue, is it important to "arrive at a compromise and present a unified higher education position to the federal government," or to "recognize the conflicting interests and present the different positions to the federal government." The differences presented in Figure 7 are very large and in the direction we would expect. Those who prefer an organizational alternative that would strengthen presidential associations and deemphasize coordination (Model C) are much more concerned that different conflicting positions get voiced and presented to the federal government; the presidents choosing the alternatives that call for stronger association coordination at the national level (Models B and D) much more often feel conflicting interests should reach a compromise and present a unified position to the federal government. The differences are quite striking: for example, 69% of the presidents choosing Model C but only about 30% of those choosing Model B or D feel that "presenting the different positions" is more important when associations conflict. Apparently, a president's feelings about the appropriate stance higher education should take to the federal government when institutional interests are in conflict is a major factor in determining the president's views about the way the associations should be organized on the national level.

It is interesting that those presidents who wish most to continue the present organizational arrangements (Model A) are evenly divided on this issue: 44% believe that conflicting associations should present different positions to the federal government, while 42% feel they should arrive at some unified position. The current system seems to present a sensitive balance on this issue, receiving equal endorsement from the presidents representing the two divergent points of view.

FIGURE 7: VIEWS ABOUT CONFLICTING ASSOCIATIONS' APPROACH TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: OF PRESIDENTS CHOOSING FIVE MODELS OF ORGANIZATION

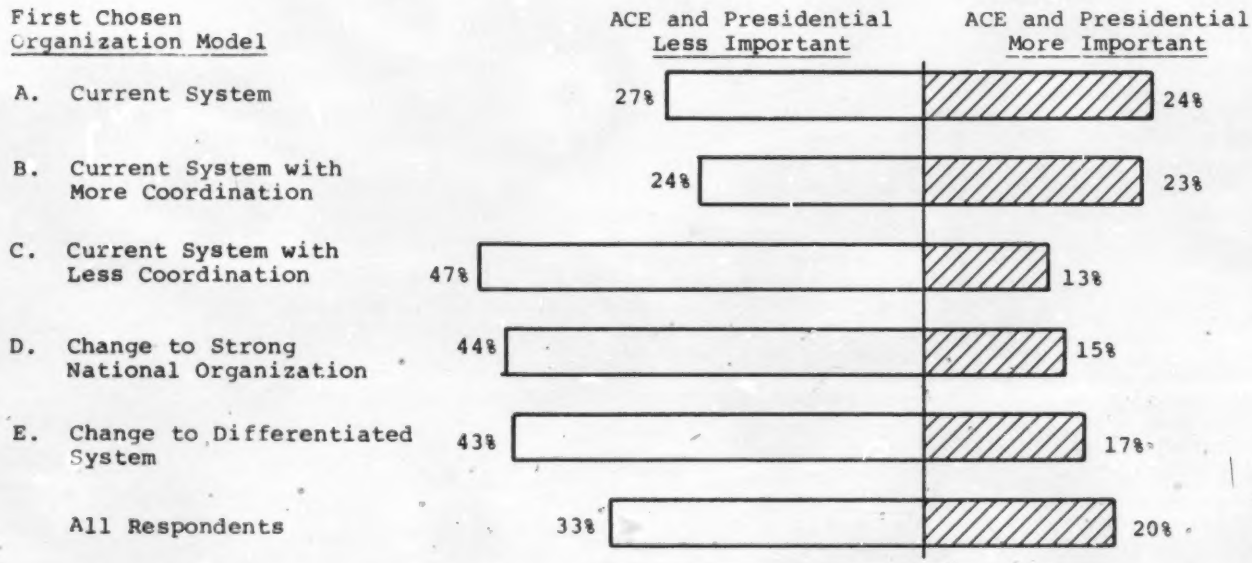


NOTE: Figures do not include presidents who gave no first-choice model, who had "no opinion" on how conflicting associations should approach the federal government, or who checked the midpoint "3" on the five-point scale.

Importance of National Associations. Does the choice of organizational model among the national associations come from the presidents who see ACE and the presidential associations as more important or as less important? Figure 8 shows how presidents choosing different organization models responded to the question that asked them to compare the importance of their membership in ACE and the national presidential associations with their membership in specialized, state and regional associations. It is clear that the organizational models that call most for change (C, D, and E) are much more often supported by those presidents who feel that ACE and the presidential associations are less important than their other memberships.

This suggests that presidential support for major change in the organization among the national associations comes more often from presidents for whom the importance of these associations is somewhat marginal. To some extent, the marginality might be a reflection of the presidents' lack of satisfaction with the current system, and they might feel ACE and the national associations were more important if changes were made in the direction they prefer.

FIGURE 8: IMPORTANCE OF ACE AND PRESIDENTIAL ASSOCIATIONS COMPARED TO SPECIALIZED, STATE AND REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS: OF PRESIDENTS CHOOSING FIVE MODELS OF ORGANIZATION

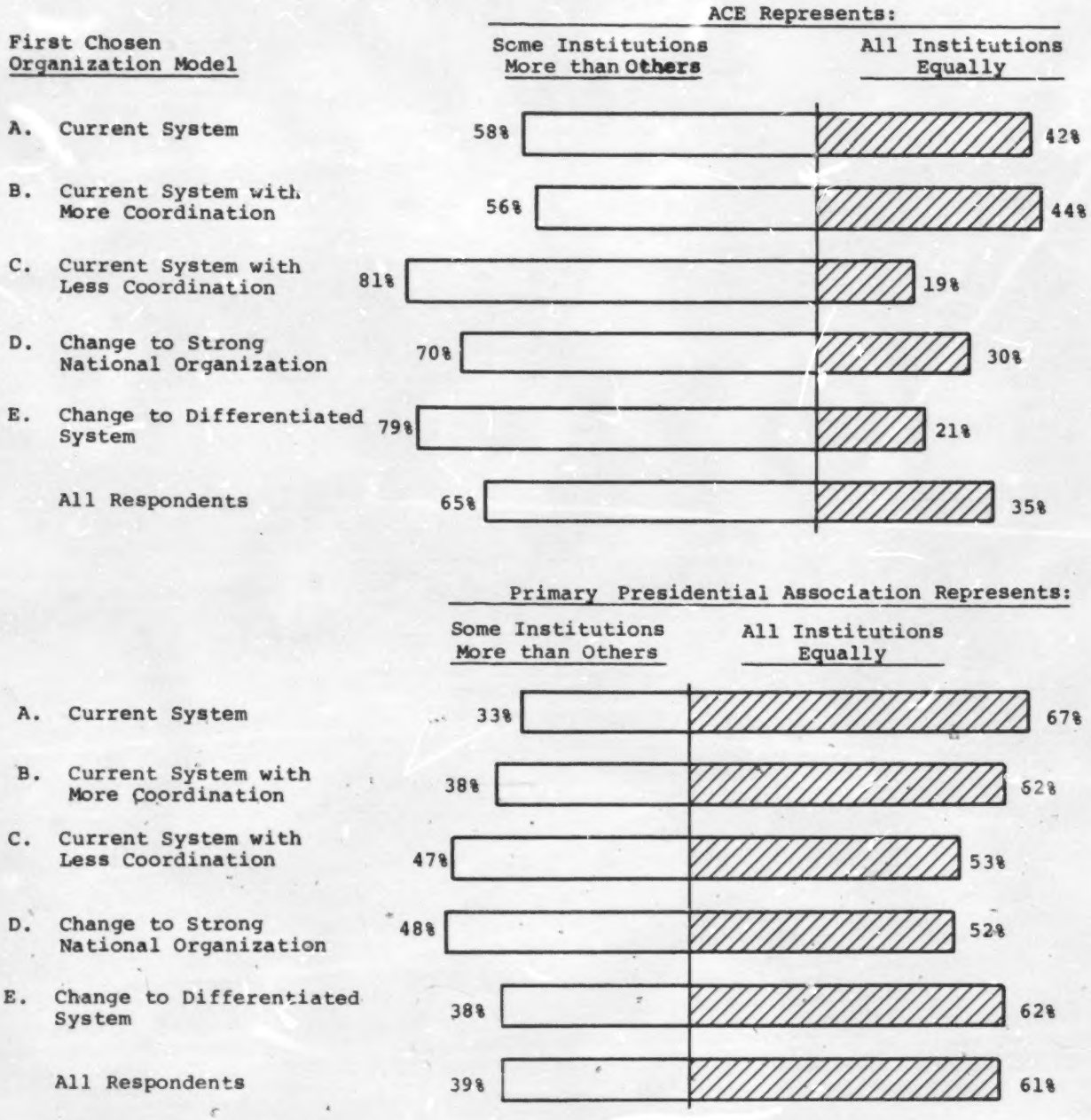


NOTE: Figures do not include presidents who felt associations were "equally important."

Views of Associations' Representation. What is the relationship between the choice of an organizational model and the presidents' feelings about the pattern of membership representation of the ACE and the primary associations? Figure 9 suggests that presidents' preference for a model in the relationships among associations is related to their feelings about the representation of the associations, particularly ACE. Those presidents who want change in the relationships among associations (Models C, D, and E) are those who much more often feel that ACE represents some types of institutions more than others. In a sense, the desire for a change in the relationships among the associations is associated with a more critical view of ACE.

As indicated in Figure 9, there is also some relationship between choosing Models C or D and a critical view of the representation offered by the president's primary presidential association. But this relationship is much less clear than that between choice of a model and the president's view of ACE. This is not surprising since the five alternative models mainly involve the role that should be played by ACE or some different coordinating pattern. We would, therefore, expect that the choice of a model would be markedly affected by the president's current view of ACE.

FIGURE 9: VIEWS ABOUT ACE'S AND PRIMARY ASSOCIATION'S REPRESENTATION: OF PRESIDENTS CHOOSING FIVE MODELS OF ORGANIZATION

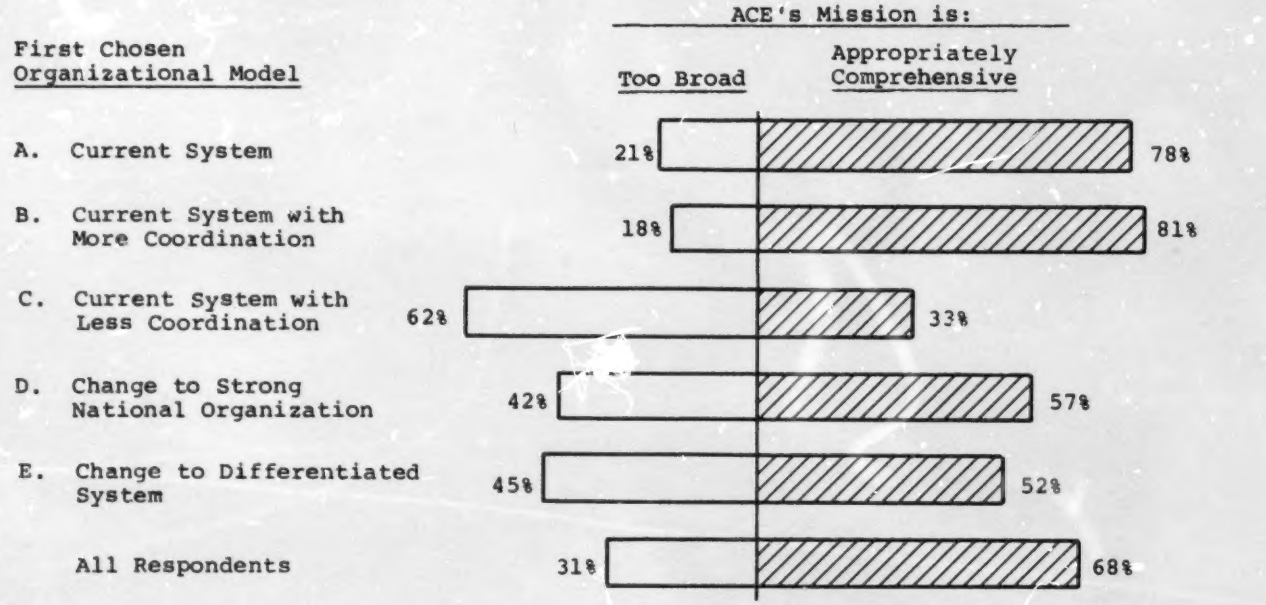


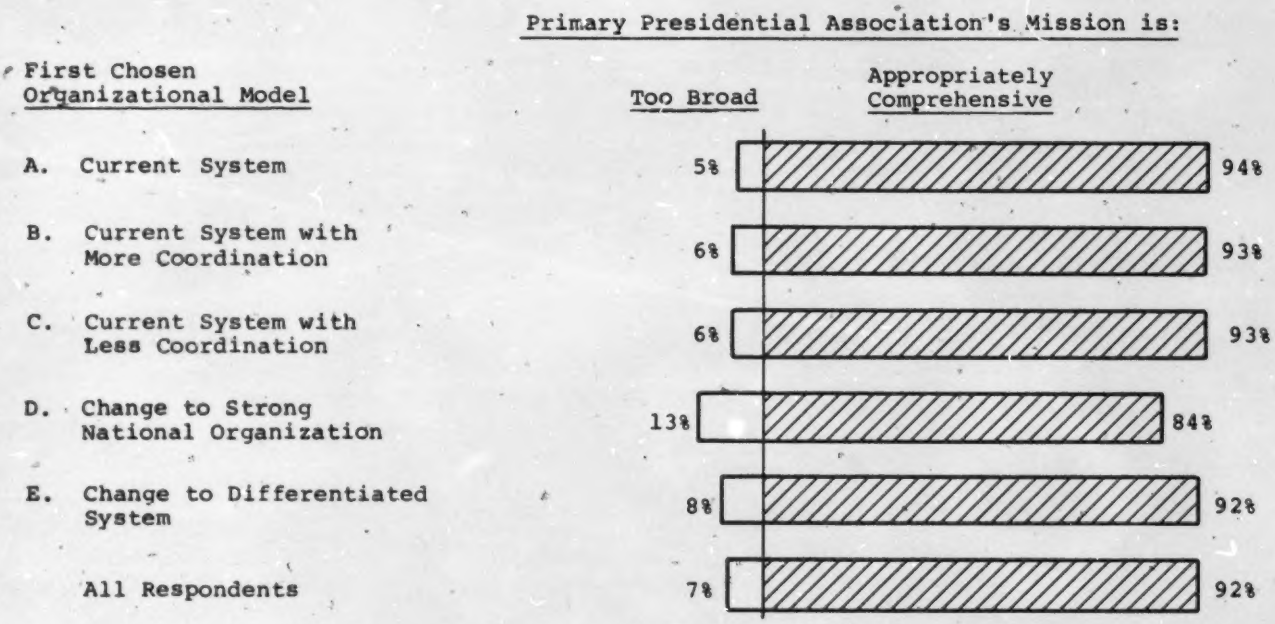
NOTE: Figures do not include presidents who gave no first-choice model.

Views of Associations' Mission. Figure 10 essentially repeats the same pattern of findings as Figure 9, but in relation to the presidents' views of the clarity of their associations' mission. Those presidents who favor the current system as it is (Model A) or with a stronger coordinating role for ACE (Model B) predominantly feel that ACE's present mission is "appropriately comprehensive." This positive view of ACE's mission is held by a much smaller majority of the presidents who favor the changes represented in Models D and E. Those who favor Model C (a lesser coordinating and integrating role for ACE) are even more critical of ACE's present mission; a majority of them (62%) feel that it is "too broad."

As with representation, the presidents' feelings about the mission of their primary presidential association are much less related to their choice of organizational model. Regardless of the model they choose, almost all the presidents feel that their primary association's mission is appropriate.

FIGURE 10: VIEWS ABOUT ACE'S AND PRIMARY ASSOCIATION'S MISSION: OF PRESIDENTS CHOOSING FIVE MODELS OF ORGANIZATION



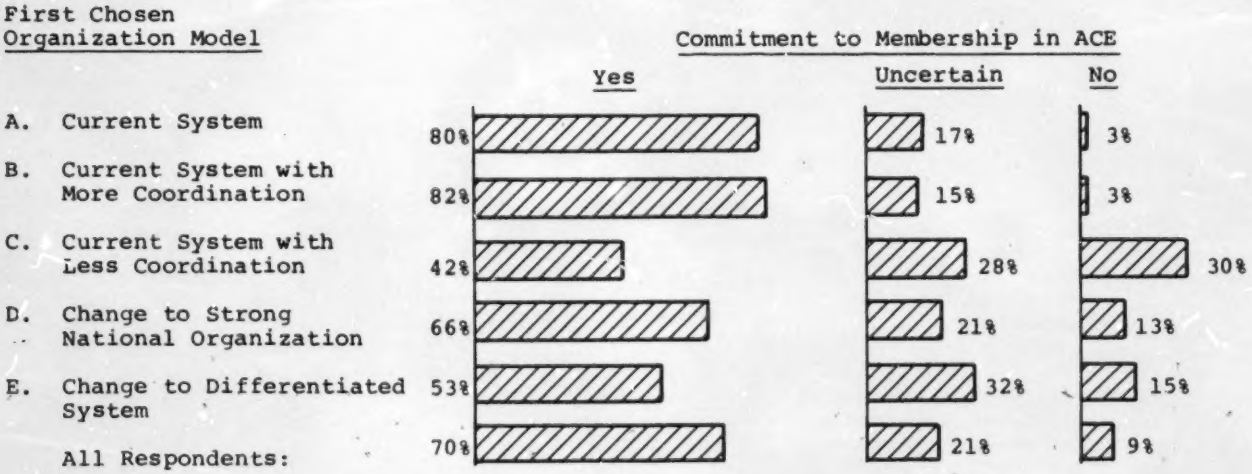


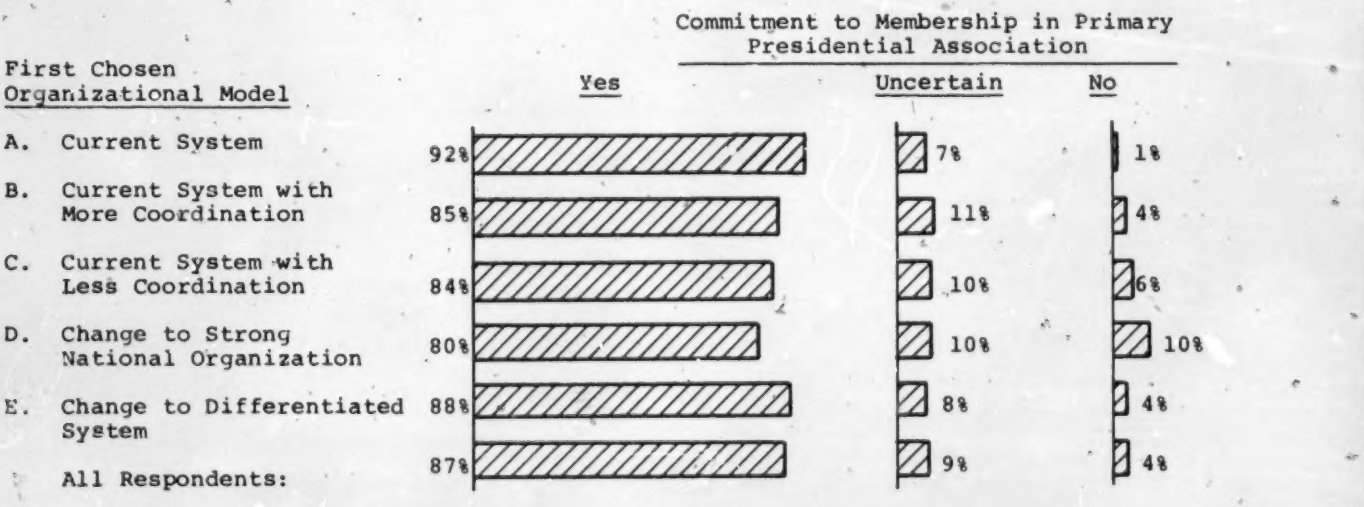
NOTE: Figures do not include presidents who gave no first-choice model, who had "no opinion" about the association's mission, or felt the mission was "too specialized."

Members' Organizational Commitment. The final figure (Figure 11) presents the relationship of choice of a model to the president's response to the questions: "Are you committed to continue your membership" (to ACE and to the primary presidential association)? Again we see a marked relationship between the model selected and commitment to ACE, but not with the primary presidential association.

As we would expect, those presidents who advocate the current system (Model A) are predominantly committed to continuing their membership in ACE. Interestingly those who choose Model B -- the current system with a stronger coordinating role for ACE -- are just as strongly committed. This is in marked contrast to the presidents whose first choice is Model C -- the current system but with less coordination from ACE; among these presidents a majority are either uncertain or negative in their commitment to continue membership in ACE. The comparison between those choosing Models D and E is similar to the contrast between B and C, although not as strong; the presidents who call for change to a strong national organization are somewhat more committed to ACE than those who call for change to a more differentiated system.

FIGURE 11: COMMITMENT TO CONTINUING MEMBERSHIP IN ACE AND PRIMARY ASSOCIATION: OF MEMBERS CHOOSING FIVE MODELS OF ORGANIZATION





NOTE: Figures do not include presidents who gave no first-choice model.

When the findings on representation, mission and commitment are considered together, a clear pattern emerges. The call for a stronger role for ACE and for more coordination of associations at the national level, comes from presidents who are generally more satisfied with the current activities of and relationships among the associations. The call for less coordination and for more voice for institutional differences comes from presidents who are less satisfied and less committed to continuing membership. This is in contrast to much of the criticism about the national associations which comes from those who feel there is not enough coordination.

This pattern of findings has implications for the response we may expect from institutional presidents if, in the coming years, we move to a pattern of greater coordination among the national associations. Our survey suggests that such a move would be favored by the majority of the institutional presidents. But the minority of the presidents who would not favor such a move, who would be concerned about their own institutional interests getting submerged, are the minority who are already dissatisfied and least committed. Thus, persons advocating any move toward greater coordination would have to be sensitive to this issue if they are to prevent further alienation of this already less committed group.

OVERVIEW OF PRESIDENTIAL SURVEY

In general, the presidents are positive in their views of the national associations of which they are members. There is a clear presidential consensus that the relationship to the federal government represents a critical function of ACE and the presidential associations over the next decade. A majority of the presidents feel that this function will necessitate an increase in the coordination among the associations.

However, for many presidents there is a concern about what increased coordination at the national level will entail. In judging their own associations, the one question that elicits the most negative response from the presidents is the one that asked whether they feel their associations represent "all their members' institutions equally" or "some types of institutions more than others." A majority of the ACE members and a large minority of the other presidential association members responded that the associations do not represent members equally. These responses reflect many presidents' feelings that institutional interests will differ, and their concern that their own institutional interests should be adequately represented. For these presidents, increased coordination can raise questions about representation of these separate interests. Presidents are divided in their views of how well the national associations are handling the representation of diverse interests, and whether or not associations should strive for a unified federal position when association interests are in conflict.

Only a small minority of the presidents carry their concern about their separate institutional interests to the point of supporting an association reorganization that would involve less coordination at the federal level. But it is a concern that is felt even by some who support a need for greater coordination. It is likely, therefore, that any move toward greater coordination will come from the initiative of the leadership of the national associations, not from the demands of a large body of the presidential membership. The study findings suggest that it is an initiative that most presidents would support, despite concerns over the dilution of special institutional interests.

NATIONAL OBSERVERS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ASSOCIATIONS

The national observer interviews served four purposes: 1) to obtain views of the associations collectively to contrast with the presidents' views; 2) to get views of what makes an association effective in Washington; 3) to elicit views of future issues -- particularly in the federal government arena -- that should concern the associations; and 4) to explore the implications of these assessments for the associations collectively and individually.

RATINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS COLLECTIVELY

Table 2-A compares the national observers' views of the national associations collectively with the presidents' views. They essentially agree with the presidents in assessing the limited degree to which the associations "coordinate mutual interest where appropriate" (33% agree or strongly agree) and to which they effectively represent higher education's interest to the federal government (39%). They also see them as "primarily interested in serving higher education" (55%) as opposed to association self-perpetuation. They differ from presidents in seeing the associations as being more "diverse reflecting higher education's diversity" (64%); as "primarily taking directions from institutional

needs and concerns" (61%); and in "healthy competition that serves institutional concerns" (49%). To a far greater degree than presidents, they saw the higher education associations as "reactive to issues and problems" (67%).

In rating relationships among the associations, (Table 2-B) the national observers agreed that, in federal relations, it was more "desirable to present a unified position on important issues" (55%) than did the presidents (44%). They felt strongly that in institutional relations it was important for the associations "to cooperate more, eliminating duplication and being cost effective" (76%) and that to improve both federal and institutional relations the associations "will require greater coordination and control" (82%).

It is not surprising then that in Table 2-C the national observers favor a "stronger coordinated model" as the most desirable (63% rated it first or second) while presidents rated that option second (52%). However, the national observers did rate the president's first choice, "the current, pluralistic system" as their second choice (47% rated first or second). The national observers, like the presidents, saw least promise in a "less coordinated, more competitive" (17%) model and were reluctant to endorse either a "strong national organization" (33%) or a "differentiated system" (33%). Their concerns are for a model that provides both for coordination and institutional diversity. The rationale for these views is strengthened by the interview comments summarized in the following section.

These views of the national observers suggest the national associations are diverse, taking directions primarily from institutional members, competing to serve institutions, and concerned about serving higher education. They also feel that greater coordination in both institutional services and in federal regulations is needed, that more unity on important national issues is desirable, and that the associations are highly reactive.

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF PRESIDENTIAL AND NATIONAL OBSERVER RATINGS

A. Views of National Associations Collectively

Percent: Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2)

Statement	Presidents (N 1250)	Observers (N 33)
A diverse set of associations that reflect higher education's diverse interests.	50%	64%
Coordinating mutual interests where appropriate.	30%	33%
Primarily taking direction from institution's needs and concerns.	40%	61%
Effectively representing higher education's interest to the federal government.	42%	39%
In healthy competition that appropriately serves institutional concerns.	24%	49%
Primarily interested in serving higher education effectively.	52%	55%
Reactive to issues and problems.	46%	67%

B. Association Relationships

In federal relations, it is desirable for associations to present a united position on important issues.	44%	55%
In institutional relations, in offering programs and services it is important to cooperate more, eliminating duplication and being cost effective.	N.A.	76%
To improve federal and institutional relations, relations among associations will require greater coordination and control.	N.A.	82%

C. ORGANIZATION MODELS AMONG NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS	Percent Ranked 1st or 2nd	
Current, Pluralistic System	64%	47%
Stronger, Coordinated Model	52%	63%
Less Coordinated, More Competitive Model	24%	17%
Strong National Organization	33%	33%
A Differentiated System	33%	33%

VIEWS OF ASSOCIATION EFFECTIVENESS

One part of our interviews concentrated on the national observers' views of the characteristics of the most effective higher educational associations among these eight on which we focused. While there was great variation, some common through not surprising characteristics of associations that were deemed effective in working with their member institutions and in their federal relations emerged.

Institutional Services. Associations considered to be effective in working with their institutional members had the following characteristics:

* A dynamic, respected, articulate, non-dictorial president who is sensitive to institutional needs.
* A competent association staff oriented towards institutional concerns.
* A clear mission and focus.
* An association governance structure which is representative of the membership and is non-exclusive. Actions reflect the expressed concerns of the members and the board, not just the staff.
* High quality programs and services that address issues confronting the member institutions.
* Provide institutional assistance in obtaining access to and grants from foundations and government agencies and offices.
* A homogeneous membership.

The observers, as noted previously, rated the associations as more institutionally oriented and in healthy competition than did the presidents (Table 2). While their ratings stressed the need for the associations to cooperate more to avoid duplication and to become more cost effective in providing institutional services, they also noted the lack of mechanisms among the presidential associations for achieving this. They further observed an increasing competition between the presidential and specialized associations in attempting to provide institutional programs and services, and noted that ACE's emerging emphasis in this direction seemed to reduce their potential role for providing coordination or guidance in this arena.

Federal Relations. Associations considered to be effective in federal relations had the following characteristics:

* A strong, visible, knowledgeable, and articulate president and/or chief lobbyist.
* A competent staff which can provide solid, timely, and effective policy analysis.
* Knowledge of how the political system works.
* Represents a clearly defined constituency with a focused set of concerns.
* Strong advocacy for its position.
* Strong ties with its members for issue clarification and for lobbying.

* On top of the issues -- anticipatory not reactive. They were viewed as reactive (Table 2).

While the observers stressed the need for unity among higher education associations on important issues and recommended working cooperatively in federal relations (Table 2), they did not see that as strongly associated with federal relations effectiveness. Rather, selective coalitions on specific issues and often with different associations participating appeared to be the more desirable modus operandi. This need for selective coalition building, combined with the observers' recognition that increased membership heterogeneity made consensus within an association very difficult, underscored the burden on the small staffs of larger associations and the even more difficult tasks for ACE in providing leadership and coordination for federal relation efforts among the presidential associations. The increasingly active and influential role of some specialized associations (e.g., NASFAA, NACUBO, etc.) in federal relations made the picture more complex.

The point was clearly made that effective federal relations efforts among the associations required: a) early identification of issues, b) involvement of concerned interests or associations before decisions were imminent, c) use of the most effective political and analytic staff available, and d) a capacity for compromise. While both presidents and observers rated the associations only moderately effective in this area (Table 2), the observers stressed that the higher education associations -- largely through the efforts of key individuals -- had improved in their federal relations efforts in recent years. The difficulty, they noted, is that other Washington-based interest groups which were usually more effective have continued to become even more so. The sophistication of federal relations efforts by all interest groups and the expectations of them by government groups has also increased.

For those associations attempting to respond broadly both to institutional needs and to the federal relations concerns of their institutions, the demand is extensive. The picture for the future does not suggest it will become less so.

VIEWS OF THE FUTURE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ASSOCIATIONS

The national observers emphasized the need for the national associations to anticipate emerging issues both at the institutional and federal level and to review their own strategy for responding to them -- individually -- or in concert.

Institutional Issues and Association Services. The major institutional issues were not unlike those identified by the presidents in our follow-up phone interviews: concerns about student aid, enrollment decline and shifting student characteristics, an aging faculty, underprepared students, financial strains, competition for funds, deferred maintenance, decreased autonomy, the litany is endless. By and large the observers did not see these changes as affecting the associations other than to intensify the demands that institutions might make on them for programs and services at the same time that both institutions and associations are less able to pay for them. This underscores the concerns of presidents and observers that associations cooperate more and become more cost effective in offering institutional services (Table 2). However, it also highlights the need to assess which programs can really be run best from a national association level (as opposed to state, consortium, or institutional level efforts) and to evaluate which ones are really helping institutions.

National Issues and Federal Relations Functions. The observers saw more complex association impacts from the national issues emerging or likely to emerge in the federal government. They noted issues like the declining federal priority for higher education, possible changes in student aid, OSHA regulations, tax reforms, social security modifications, legislation on the aging and on minorities, shifting research funding priorities, competition for education funds from other federal agencies, NLRB revisions, judicial rulings on a variety of topics, etc. Many of these issues are not new and their likelihood or direction is unclear. What most observers noted is that these issues reflect a critical change. In the past, the key issues affecting higher education emerged from the education related agencies and congressional committees. Increasingly the issues affecting higher education do not emerge in these settings and are not primarily directed at higher education.

The implications of this change, the need for a more anticipatory federal relations effort, is clear. Associations need to monitor a wide array of both state and federal governmental sources to identify, at an early stage, those issues that have higher educational implications. This will require a large and more sophisticated staff of analysists and lobbyists -- or more effective cooperation and coordinating of those on existing association staffs. Some efforts to achieve this are underway with ACE support, and participation by some associations. The extent and effectiveness was not clearly defined in the interviews.

This change also suggests that effective coalitions for examining and responding to these issues may increasingly involve non-higher education interest groups. The associations need to develop new and to expand present linkages. While some associations have begun to recognize the need for this expanded monitoring role and to work with new coalitions that include non-higher education members, this capacity has yet to be actively developed. It also reinforces the presidential survey and national observer ratings which call for great emphasis and focus on the federal relations function by ACE and the presidential associations, the greater emphasis on coordination in the ranking of the models, and concern for presenting compromise views on key issues expressed in the presidential and particularly the observer ratings. However, the more diverse monitoring and broader based selective coalition building effort will be increasingly difficult as it becomes even more important.

CONCLUSION

This picture of the current and future views of the national associations reflects upon some key dimensions that individual associations can and should address in order to improve their own institutional and/or federal relations functions. It highlights the increasing pressure for and complexity of the inter-association relationships. Implicitly it reinforces the need for each association to focus carefully upon its particular and defensible missions, to understand and differentiate the functions among the associations, and to better coordinate the delivery of services to and for the institutions at the campuses, in the state capitals, and in Washington. The exact form of that relationship and the detailed nature of the organizational model interrelating the association requires more in-depth examination of the associations' current and projected activities and relationships.

A sense of statesmanship by the elected and appointed leadership of the associations and a dedicated concern for and willingness to compromise where indicated on behalf of the interests of all higher education appears to have a particular urgency. There is no support for association self-interest and growth at the expense of other associations and of higher education in general.

Defense for diversity among the associations is supported. Increased diversity among them which may be duplicative, repetitious, costly, and counter productive at both the institutional and governmental levels is questioned. Association strength and leadership, individually and collectively, will be needed increasingly during the 1980's.